

FEATURES

Herpes sufferers form support group for HELP

By **RANDALL PATTERSON**
Staff Writer

"She knew she had something," Alex Funk said of the person who gave him genital herpes. "She didn't tell me it was contagious or what it was. She said it was a rash. I thought it was a heat rash or something."

Alex Funk is a technology-oriented person whose world philosophy involves the "biomass" and the "maximization of the differentiation of states." An instrumentation specialist, an environmentalist and a former college activist, he is smart and articulate and 14 years a herpes victim.

"I didn't know I had it for five years," he said. "Nobody could tell me what it was. The last time I went to a clinic, the doctor told me I had a case of shoddy nodes and not to worry about it."

"It wasn't very long after that that my girlfriend of the time informed me I'd transmitted it to her. All those years of going to clinics and then to have someone without any medical training give you the news. Sort of disappointing."

Alex Funk was one of the founders in 1981 of Triangle HELP, an organization designed to educate and to encourage North Carolina's herpes victims. HELP is an acronym for Herpetics Engaged in Living Productively, but Funk calls that "Mickey

Mouse."

On Saturday morning, Funk was groggy after a Friday night spent manning a telephone herpes crisis line.

Over breakfast, he began to explain the rationale behind Triangle HELP.

"The best way to prevent the spread of herpes is to give victims an environment in which they can realize they're not alone," Funk said. "We feel we can only do that through information and a positive approach, rather than by putting our heads in the sand."

"I really do feel that someone with herpes has no business dating someone that does not. But when you talk freely about it and admit it, you run into all sorts of people that have it."

Funk is not a public relations man, though, and doesn't mind that AIDS has stolen herpes' media limelight. AIDS, he said, will force the world to deal openly with sexually transmitted diseases.

"Just because sexually transmitted diseases happen to involve certain parts of our bodies that are always supposed to be kept hidden and not talked about, well, that kind of attitude is dangerous," he said. "And nothing is going to point that out more than AIDS."

AIDS research, Funk said, will

affect everything from herpes to cancer.

However, Funk's motivation to help the herpes victim is more than practical, more than care for the rest of society. He is moved by an understanding of the pain the victim endures.

"The real paradox is, in the face of the incredible ubiquity of this disease, people act like it's unusual and rare," Funk said. "And so people, when they come down with it, have this unfortunate and completely erroneous feeling that they're the only one in the world with herpes. And that's a lot of needless human suffering."

Funk estimated that by the time people reach their '80s, over 75 percent of them have been exposed to one of the herpes viruses.

"Many people like to make a distinction between types one and two, but there's almost no distinction at all," Funk said. "Either type can show up in either place."

While HELP can allay the mental anguish of the herpes victim, until recently there was very little to be done about the physical suffering. Funk said that although only a comparative few of those carrying the herpes virus actually suffer, those who do experience recurrences can now find some relief with the drug Acyclovir, now marketed under the

brand name Zovirax.

"It's the first thing that has done anything for this virus," he said. "But it's not an outright cure. It's only effective during a recurrence."

There are about 50 people involved in Triangle HELP now, and Funk said about 10 of them meet the first Thursday of each month in a room at Burroughs-Wellcome Pharmaceutical Co. Funk said it is coincidence that the company happens to be the developer of Acyclovir.

"They're very friendly," he said.

"They don't experiment on us. We just go in, have our meeting and go home. Sometimes it makes me think that everything must have a purpose, and just what is the purpose of this thing?"

Those who have genital herpes and would like to know they are not alone can call Triangle HELP at 688-8950 in Durham. In Chapel Hill, University students who have herpes, or think they might, can go to the Student Health Center for confidential treatment.

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Bumper crop of summer tomatoes perfect for a simple and tasty sauce

You might not consider it a problem, but dealing with all the fresh tomatoes this time of year can be difficult.

This recipe uses excess tomatoes and other fresh summer produce to make a simple and delicious pasta sauce. Use any combination of the vegetables listed and anything else you have on hand that you think would be good.

This sauce depends on fresh and juicy tomatoes as a base. Some people peel and seed them, but I never bother. If the tomatoes are not juicy enough, add a tablespoon or so of canned tomato sauce to help the consistency.

Chicken can also be used in this recipe, with a few extra steps. Take two pieces and remove the skin. Brown them in several tablespoons of vegetable oil over high heat for about eight minutes on each side. White meat cooks faster than dark, so adjust accordingly.

Remove the chicken and the excess oil, leaving the sediments in the bottom. Add an extra two tablespoons of both chicken stock and wine and scrape the pan bottom. Let most of the liquid cook off and follow the rest of the recipe, adding the chicken with the tomatoes.

The recipe feeds two. Any sort of red wine, white wine, or sherry may be used.

Summer Pasta

Enough fettucini or other pasta for two

1 tbsp. butter

Russ Clegg Captain Cook

1 cup tomatoes, coarsely chopped
1 cup or so zucchini, broccoli and mushrooms

3 tbsp. grated carrots

2 tbsp. chicken stock

2 tbsp. wine

1 clove garlic

2 tbsp. tomato paste

1 tsp. basil

1/4 tsp. thyme

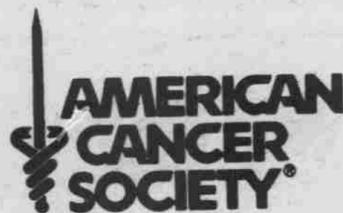
1. Cook the fettucini according to the package.

2. Heat the butter. When the foam

begins to subside, add the garlic and carrots and saute for one minute.

3. Add the tomatoes, basil and thyme. Cook over high heat for three or four minutes.

4. Add the remaining ingredients, stirring in the tomato paste. Cook for a few more minutes, letting sauce thicken. Pour over fettucini.



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